

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY: ARA/PAF: WSDIEDRICH

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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FOLTEL FM SECSTATE 15 OCT 73 SENT ACTION PANAMA INFO MOSCOW
SANTIAGO REPEATED TO YOU FOR INFO

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E.O. 11652

TAGS:PN- PFOR

SUBJECT: PANAMA: CHILE: SOVIET SHIP ATTACHED IN CANAL

FOLLOWING GUIDANCE PREPARED FOR DEPT. SPOKESMAN ON IF ASKED
ONLY BASIS MONDAY, OCTOBER 15. (NO QUESTIONS ASKED AT
NOON BRIEFING.)

Q: WHY IS A SOVIET CARGO SHIP BEING DETAINED IN THE CANAL?

A: THE SOVIET CARGO SHIP WILLIAM FOSTER IS UNDER ATTACHMENT
ARISING OUT OF A CLAIM BY TWO CHILEAN FIRMS THAT THE SHIP
FAILED TO DELIVER TO VALPARAISO CERTAIN CARGO FOR WHICH
THEY HAD PAID. ATTACHMENT IS A COMMON AND ROUTINE ACTION,
ESPECIALLY IN THE CANAL ZONE, WHERE 17 HAVE OCCURRED SO
FAR THIS YEAR. ATTACHMENT OF A VESSEL IN THE CANAL ZONE
CONSTITUTES NO ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF THE USA
NOR JUDGMENT BY THE US GOVERNMENT CONCERNING THE MERITS OF
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THE COMPLAINT. THE WILLIAM FOSTER HAS BEEN ALLOWED TO

TRANSIT THE CANAL FROM PACIFIC TO ATLANTIC AND IS NOW AT ANCHOR IN CHRISTOBAL HARBOR, WHERE IT WILL REMAIN UNTIL A BOND IS POSTED, THE JUDICIAL PROCESS IS COMPLETED OR THE ACTION IS DISMISSED.

Q: HAS THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT HAD ANY CONTACT WITH THE US GOVERNMENT ON THE MATTER?

A: YES. THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON CONTACTED THE DEPARTMENT ON THE DAY AFTER THE MARSHALL ATTACHED THE SHIP -- OCTOBER 13.

Q: WHAT WAS SAID?

A: I WILL NOT REVEAL THE SUBSTANCE OF THE CONVERSATION. I WOULD LIKE TO REITERATE THAT SUCH ATTACHMENTS ARE ROUTINE, IMPLYING NO US GOVERNMENT ATTITUDE TOWARD THE MERITS OF THE COMPLAINT.

Q: IS THE CUBAN SHIP STILL UNDER ATTACHMENT?

A: YES. THE IMIAS IS UNDER ATTACHMENT IN THE GATUN LAKE.

Q: THE IMIAS, AS I RECALL, WAS ATTACHED IN CONNECTION WITH A SIMILAR COMPLAINT BY A CHILEAN PARTY. ISN'T THERE A PATTERN EMERGING HERE: THE US, AT THE BEHEST OF CHILE, ACTING AGAINST CHILE'S OPPONENTS, CUBA AND THE SOVIET UNION.

A: NO. US MARSHALLS WOULD ATTACH THE VESSEL OF ANY COUNTRY IN SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES. IN FACT, VESSELS OF VIRTUALLY ALL COUNTRIES WHOSE SHIPPING PASSES THROUGH THE CANAL HAVE PROBABLY BEEN ATTACHED AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER.

TELEGRAM TO BE DECLASSIFIED IN THREE MONTHS JANUARY 15, 1974. KISSINGER UNQTE KISSINGER

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